

## COVID-19 (coronavirus) Information (5/2/20)

The information regarding the COVID-19 (coronavirus) is evolving and you can expect guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) will be updated as these agencies receive new information.

It is important to get you information from reliable sources and the links to CDC and DPH are provided as part of this message; visiting these sites will keep you informed and will provide you with the most up to date information on the situation.

### **GUIDANCE FOR WEARING FACE MASKS IN PUBLIC SETTINGS ISSUED May 1, 2020**

On May 1, 2020, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, issued an order effective 12:01 am, Wednesday, May 6, 2020, requiring individuals to wear masks in public places. This guidance is issued pursuant to that Order to further clarify who is required to wear masks and any exceptions.

Any person who is in a place open to the public in the Commonwealth, when unable to maintain a distance of approximately six feet from every other person, shall cover their mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face-covering. Masks are required at all times when:

- Inside or waiting in line outside of grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retail stores;
- Providing or using the services of any taxi, car, livery, ride-sharing, or similar service;
- On any form of public transit, including train or bus; and
- In an enclosed or semi-enclosed transit stop or waiting area.

The use of a mask does not replace important social distancing measures. All individuals must continue to maintain more than 6 feet of distance from other people; wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; and stay home when sick.

Children under the age of 2 years should not wear face coverings or masks. For children 2 years of age and older, a mask or face covering should be used, if possible. Mask use by children 2 years of age and up to the age of five is encouraged but should be at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian at this time. Parents and guardians should ensure that the mask fits snugly and does not obstruct a child's ability to breathe.

The fit of face coverings should be as follows:

- Fit securely and comfortably against the side of the face;
- Be secured with ties or ear loops;
- Allow for breathing without restriction; and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change of shape.

Exceptions for wearing face masks include situations that may inhibit an individual from wearing a face-mask safely. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Those who cannot breathe safely;
- Those who, due to a behavioral health diagnosis, are unable to do so;
- Those communicating with people who rely upon lip-reading;
- Those who require supplemental oxygen to breathe; and
- Those who are exercising outdoors and are able to keep physical distance from others.

Masks and face coverings should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use. When possible, masks should be washed in a washing machine. If a washing machine is unavailable, masks should be washed with soap and water and allow drying fully before using again.

Per COVID-19 order No. 31, violations of the masking order shall be punished in the following manner: (a) the first offense shall result in a warning and (b) the second or subsequent offense may result in a civil citation and a fine of up to \$300.

For information on how to make your own masks please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

#### CAUTION DEFERRING URGENT MEDICAL TREATMENT

On 4/23/20, at the Governor's regular press conference, hospital leaders from around the Commonwealth noted a drop of emergency room visits and those seeking urgent, acute medical treatment; they're concerned people maybe avoiding medical treatment because they are afraid of contracting COVID-19 at the hospital. The Governor and the hospital leaders outlined their concerns with the drop in those seeking care and assured the public the hospitals' staff are working to maintain the safety of their facilities. They provided the following information to the public.

- 1.) Planning done by the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the hospitals, to stand up additional hospital capacity to address the needs of those with COVID-19 has provided hospital capacity to address the regular, urgent medical needs of the Commonwealth's citizens.
- 2.) The use of telehealth, including calls to your health care provider, can help citizens determine if urgent medical treatment is needed and determine if a hospital visit is necessary.
- 3.) Deferring treatment for symptoms of serious illness (even minor symptoms) can increase the need for emergency care and may result in more serious issues.
- 4.) As always if you need emergency medical attention call 911 without delay.

The Governor and hospital leaders recommend against the delay of needed medical treatments and individuals should follow the recommendations of their health care providers to get that necessary care.

## SYMPTOM CHECKER

### *Check your symptoms for COVID-19 online*

Massachusetts residents can visit [www.Buoy.com/mass](https://www.buoy.com/mass) to get advice from an online health assistant safely at home, for free.

**Buoy's online tool is not to be used in place of emergency medical care. If this is an emergency, call 911 or visit the nearest emergency room.**

Buoy will connect you with the appropriate health care resource based on your symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19.

## POSITIVE TEST FOR COVID-19

### What will happen if I test positive for COVID-19?

In order to slow the spread of the disease you will be asked to isolate in your home. The purpose of isolation is to keep infected individuals from passing the disease onto others by separating themselves from others.

If you test positive for COVID-19 you will be contacted by a public health nurse from the Board of Health or a Contract Tracer working for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC) who will explain the steps that need to be taken to properly isolate yourself from others.

## CONTACT WITH INDIVIDUAL TESTING POSITIVE

### What if you have had contact with an individual who tested positive COVID-19?

In order to slow the spread of the disease, those individuals who are a "close contact" (being within 6' of another individual for more than 15 minutes) with individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be asked to quarantine in their home; determination of close contacts is made by a public health nurse or contact tracer who will instruct you on the quarantine process.

\*\*\*It is important to cooperate with the nurse or contact tracer when they contact you. As with all crisis there are those who try to take advantage of the situation. **In order to protect yourself from scammers, it is important to note that public health nurses nor contact tracers will ask for your social security number or health insurance number.**\*\*\*

The steps for isolation and quarantine can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/news/dph-public-health-advisory-stay-at-home-advisory> scroll to **Resources** and click on Information Sheet under Self Quarantine section.

## INFORMATION

The frequent asked question (FAQ) section of the Department of Public Health's website (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-covid-19>) addresses many of

the questions being received by the Board of Health (personal protection, travel and the Department's protocols for testing for COVID-19 (coronavirus)) and along with links to additional useful information which is updated as new information emerges.

**-Get the latest info about the Coronavirus in Massachusetts sent right to your phone**

**To get up-to-date alerts, text COVIDMA to [888-777](tel:888-777)**

**-Citizens can access the Massachusetts 211 system: Dial 211 and follow the prompts.**

### ***About Massachusetts 2-1-1***

*Mass2-1-1 is the 24/7 statewide information and referral line available in 140+ languages that connects callers with critical social service programs and organizations in their local community. It can be reached by dialing 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone in the state. Mass2-1-1 is a free information and referral service provided through funding from three contracts with the state of Massachusetts to be their official 24-hour call line, as well as funding from 19 local United Ways across the state.*

### **GOVERNOR'S ORDERS**

You can find updates, emergency orders, and guidance associated with the Governor's declaration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency at the following link.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-state-of-emergency>

### **PREPAREDNESS**

As more cases of COVID-19 are being reported there are actions you and your family can take to prepare; the information below is from the CDC website.

***Here is what you can do to prepare your family in case COVID-19 spreads in your community.***

- Know where to find local information on COVID-19 and local trends of COVID-19 cases.
- Know the [signs and symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and what to do if symptomatic:
  - Stay home when you are sick
  - Call your health care provider's office in advance of a visit
  - Limit movement in the community
  - Limit visitors
- Know what additional measures those at [higher risk](#) and who are vulnerable should take.
- Implement [steps to prevent illness](#) (e.g., stay home when sick, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, clean frequently touched surfaces daily).
- Create a [household plan](#) of action in case of illness in the household or disruption of daily activities due to COVID-19 in the community.
  - Consider 2-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications, food and other essentials. Know how to get food delivered if possible.
  - Establish ways to communicate with others (e.g., family, friends, co-workers).

- *Establish plans to telework, what to do about childcare needs, how to adapt to cancellation of events.*
- *Know about emergency operations plans for schools/workplaces of household members.*

Additional preparedness information is located at the link below.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/index.html>

## PREVENTION

Individuals should follow the CDC's prevention actions listed below in order to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases.

*There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:*

- *Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.*
- *Stay home when you are sick.*
- *Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.*
- *Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.*
- *Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.*
  - *If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.*

## IMPORTANT LINKS

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-printable-fact-sheets>

We at the Health Department are available to speak to citizens regarding questions they may have and help them find answers to their questions.